

BISHOP LEGRAND RICHARDS*Presiding Bishop of the Church*

It is a real pleasure to have the privilege of attending this conference. Last night most of you were present at the bishops' meeting in the Assembly Hall, and while we were together two and a half hours, we only covered a very small portion of the program in which you bishops, particularly, are as much interested as are we.

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD PROGRAM

I thought tonight I would like to say a few words about the Aaronic Priesthood program of the Church. I am very grateful for my assignment to labor with the young men and for the fine work that is being done by the bishops and their associates in their behalf. I feel we have a program that really is effective.

I have no thought of criticism for the past, but in trying to follow our program of a record of every boy, and a monthly boys' leadership meeting, where the bishopric sit at the head and with them those who are interested in the care of the Aaronic Priesthood in the wards—the Mutual, and Sunday School officers, who also are charged with the responsibility of working with the same age group—it seems to me that we have been able to keep closer in touch with the boys.

For instance, through this program we found in one ward thirty-three boys between the ages of twelve and twenty-one who held no Priesthood. Another ward had twenty. When the bishop discovered this, he was as much surprised as anyone could be. He had never checked before.

When visiting a stake recently, it was reported to me that a son of one of our recent General Authorities had never been ordained, even to the office of a deacon. When his own son was to be ordained, the bishop asked him if he held such Priesthood that he could officiate, and he had to apologize and tell the bishop that he had never even been ordained a deacon. A time had been set, but for some reason he could not come, and no one followed the matter up to find out why.

Only this week I learned that one of our present General Authorities was not baptized until he was fifteen, because there was no checkup in the ward. We now have a program whereby every boy is being looked after—and we are trying to consider the boys more individually rather than in groups. It is my impression that we will come to a day in the Church when our greatest achievements will be through individual work.

INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH BOYS

In our work this winter with the Aaronic Priesthood, we are studying in the teachers' training course, Dr. Stott's book, *How to Win Boys*, and the author paraphrases a statement of the Master as he went along the Sea of Galilee and gathered to himself the fishermen, saying, "Come, and I will make you fishers of men"; Dr. Stott says, "Come, and I will make you fishers of boys."

Then he indicates that all over the world there are literally thousands and tens of thousands of boys, waiting to be caught, if we only use the right kind of bait.

In a demonstration of a boys' monthly leadership meeting in a stake recently, one of the brethren in reporting a visit he had made to a home said: "You'll never get John into his Priesthood meeting on Sunday morning so long as there is snow on the mountain so he can go skiing." After the discussion was ended and no solution was offered to get John off the mountain, I said to the bishop, "Bishop, are you going to leave John out on the mountain skiing on Sunday mornings?"

We have a feeling that there should be sufficient genius of leadership in this group with the bishopric at the head assisted by their helpers in the Aaronic Priesthood, the M.I.A., and Sunday School workers, that when they pool their wisdom, certainly they can find the kind of bait that will bring John off the mountain on Sunday morning.

There are some of us, I fear, who have the feeling that there are only a few that will be saved. I am not unmindful of the fact that the Savior said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way," but I also remembered that in the 76th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord indicates that He will save all the works of His hands, except the Sons of Perdition, and I have never been able to feel that the sons of Latter-day Saint fathers and mothers born under the covenant, are likely to be so classified. They are born heirs of all the gifts and blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So, as far as I am concerned, I believe if we will do our duty, with the help of the Almighty, we need not fear that any of our boys will be lost.

Now, when we gather them in, it is very important that we have something for them. They want to be fed, and I think besides teaching them their duties in the Priesthood, one of the greatest things we ought to have in mind is to try to plant in their hearts a testimony of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPEL OF GREAT WORTH

My experience in the Church has taught me that the most powerful motivating thing I know of in this world is a testimony of the Gospel. Possessing it, men and women will do anything; they will make any sacrifice. When we listened here yesterday to the testimonies of Brother Kimball and Brother Benson, whom we sustained as new members of the Quorum of the Twelve, both indicated that they were making financial sacrifices. I had the privilege of attending Washington Stake conference a week ago last Sunday with President Benson, and he told me of some of the financial offers that had been made to him. I took occasion before the people of the stake to compliment them on the honor that had come to them in the call of their stake president, but I assured them that Brother Benson would make great financial sacrifices, but God granted unto the children of men blessings that were worth far more than money, and reminded them of when Peter and John went to the temple and at the gate thereof found a man who had been a cripple from his youth, and when he asked alms at their hands, Peter said: "Silver and gold have I

none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And immediately the cripple's feet and ankle bones received strength, and he walked into the temple with Peter and John.

You do not buy gifts like that with money. They are the riches of heaven, that come through faith and a testimony of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recently I read the new book by Brother Hinckley on the life of President Daniel H. Wells, and I was greatly impressed with the power of his testimony. When he saw the Saints move toward the West, although he was not a member of the Church and at that time possessed much property and a wife who was opposed to the Church, and a son, he had to make a choice to cast his lot with the Saints or remain with his wife and son and his property. He left his property to her, and left her and the boy behind, going on with the Saints; and the Lord multiplied unto him because of his sacrifice, and that because of his testimony of the Gospel.

You and I know, as we have witnessed on every side, particularly in our ministry in this Church, how marvelously people sacrifice, and how willingly they do it when their souls are touched with a testimony of the Gospel.

WILLING SACRIFICES

I think of a little woman in our ward. We as a bishopric approached her and her husband, who was not a member of the Church, and asked them if they were in a position to send their son on a mission. We said, "We don't know whether you have any rich relatives who can help you"—we knew they were of meager circumstances—but we said, "The boy is worthy to go, and we would be proud to have him represent our ward."

By that time tears were trickling down the little mother's face, and she said, "Bishop, if you will send my boy on a mission, I'll see that he has the money if I have to work every day he is gone to keep him in the mission field."

When living in California, I passed a bakery night after night on my way home from work and saw one of our good sisters in her little bakery uniform clerking while she kept two of her sons in the mission field.

I would like to see this testimony planted in the hearts of our boys and our girls, and I want you to know that I know boys can have a testimony of the Gospel, even in their youth.

THE PROMISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A statement reached us at the Presiding Bishop's office a few days ago from one of our educators who in teaching a Sunday School class made this statement: "I don't know whether it would be proper for us to teach our young people to read *Leaves from My Journal*, by Wilford Woodruff, for fear they might expect similar spiritual experiences, and be disappointed."

I wonder if there are really very many Latter-day Saints who would

be afraid to promise unto the youth of Zion the spiritual gifts and blessings that God, the Eternal Father Himself, has promised.

We cannot offer our young people the Bible as the word of God, or the standard Church works, and believe only a small portion of that which is written therein.

After the Savior was resurrected, He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and then he promised them spiritual gifts and blessings as a result of their faith. I find nowhere in all Holy Writ where the Savior ever rescinded the promises He made unto those who would accept His Gospel.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God was poured out like cloven tongues of fire, and Peter, representing the apostles, spoke until men were moved upon and smitten in their hearts, and said: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter, the mouthpiece of God upon the earth, replied:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (Acts 2:38, 39.)

I want you to know that as far as I am concerned, that promise has been made good in my life, and I have faith it will be made good in the lives of my children and their children, unto the latest generation, if they have faith in God and are willing to keep His commandments.

Then I remind you that in the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni writes at some length on this subject. He tells of the marvelous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and says that by the power of the Holy Ghost might we know the truth of the words contained in that book, for "by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things." (Moroni 10:5.) Then he warns us that we deny not the gifts of God, and enumerates them and then adds that these gifts shall never be taken away as long as the world shall stand, except according to the unbelief of the children of men.

Closing that historic record with that promise, I feel we ought to live to anticipate and expect the gifts of the Spirit of God. . . . I was in this tabernacle when Wilford Woodruff told—and I think it was his last public address—how marvelously the Lord had led and guided and inspired him, and how we would not have Bishop So-and-So, if he had not heeded the promptings of the Spirit of God not to take the company of emigrants on the boat down in New Orleans, how that by the inspiration of the Spirit he arose in the night and moved his team and wagon just in time to escape the falling oak that had stood there all those years, etc.

That made an impression upon my life. I would like my children impressed with that kind of inspiration, spiritual power, spiritual gifts. Now, as I look back over my life, I want to bear testimony to you, my brethren, here this night, that the Lord has been kind to me, and I have had evidences enough all through my ministry to know that the sweetest thing in this world that I know anything about is the companionship of the Spirit of God, and the gifts and blessings that come by virtue of the same.

A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD COMES THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

It is my testimony that when you read the words of the Master that "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent," (John 17:3) you are not going to know Him just because you read about Him in books; you are going to know Him because you have partaken of His Spirit and of his power, and you have been lifted up until you know there is a power in this world so much greater than yours that it leaves no room for doubt.

We should remember the words of Paul when he said that the things of God are understood by the Spirit of God, and the things of man are understood by the spirit of man, and the natural man understandeth not the things of God, for they are foolishness unto him. We do not want natural men teaching our boys in the Aaronic Priesthood; we want men of God, who have faith in God and faith in His promises, and faith in spiritual gifts and spiritual power.

You brethren do not need to be afraid to promise your children or the youth of Zion that the blessings and gifts of the Holy Ghost will be theirs if they will live for them. You do not have to fulfill these promises. God, the Eternal Father, who made them, will fulfill them. And when they have a testimony and spiritual conviction in their souls, you do not need to worry about your boys or your girls, no matter where they go.

God bless you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER SAMUEL O. BENNION

Of the First Council of the Seventy

I am delighted, my brethren, to be in your midst tonight, and to have attended the Conference today and yesterday. It has been a great pleasure, for many years, to attend these Conferences, and to listen to the instructions of the Lord's servants. In our organizations, both of men and women, I am sure we have leaders who are divinely called, and I have heard their testimonies many times; they have strengthened mine, that this, beyond any question, is the work of the Lord.

ADMINISTRATION AND RESULTANT THOUGHTS

There are a good many things in the plan of salvation that have not yet been made clear, but which some day will be revealed. I had an experience this past summer, of administering to a child six days old, in a hospital. I had never before administered to a child; I have blessed many children, but never had administered to any. This child had to undergo an operation, so the doctor had sent it to the hospital. The mother had asked that I should be called to administer to it.

I could find no one in the hospital at that time to go with me, and so it became necessary to perform the ordinance alone. I saw that little infant lying there, just six days old; it had never taken any food, it could not digest it, and something had to be done. So I administered to the child. And this remarkable thing happened: it was unable to cry, it was